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UAE adamant it won't allow attacks on Iran from its soil

US aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln arrives in Middle East; Hezbollah chief warns any war against Iran will ignite the region

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates will not allow attacks on Iran to be launched from its territory, the foreign ministry said in a statement on Monday.

Last week, President Donald Trump said a US "armada" was heading toward the Gulf and that Washington was watching Iran closely after a crackdown on protesters.

The foreign ministry said in a statement it "has reaffirmed the United Arab Emirates' commitment to not allowing its airspace, territory or waters to be used in any hostile military actions against Iran".

The UAE hosts thousands of US personnel at Al Dhafra airbase near the capital Abu Dhabi, one of several American military bases in the Gulf.

The UAE also refuses to provide logistical support for attacks, the statement said, adding that "dialogue, de-escalation, adherence to international law, and respect for state sovereignty" were the best way to address "current crises"

US aircraft carrier arrives in Middle East

The USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group has arrived in the Middle East, the US military said on Monday, dramatically boosting American firepower in the region at a time of heightened tensions with Iran. The Lincoln and accompanying ships are "currently deployed to the Middle East to promote regional security and stability", US Central Command said in a post on X.

Hezbollah chief's warning

Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem warned on Monday that any war against the group's backer Tehran this time will ignite the region as it will also target the group.

"Faced with aggression that does not distinguish between us... we are targeted by any potential aggression and determined to defend ourselves," he said in a televised address to supporters at a solidarity rally for Iran. "We will choose at that time how to act... but we are not neutral," he said, warning that "a war on Iran this time will ignite the region".

Rubio's warning to Iraq

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned Iraq on Sunday against a pro-Iranian government as the expected return of Nouri al-Maliki as prime minister stirs Washington's concern.

Maliki, who left power in 2014 following heated pressure from the United States, has been chosen by Iraq's largest Shia bloc, which would put him in line to be nominated prime minister.

Rubio, in a telephone call with incumbent Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, voiced hope the next government will work to make Iraq "a force for stability, prosperity and security in the Middle East". "The secretary emphasised that a government controlled by Iran cannot successfully put Iraq's own interests first, keep Iraq out of regional conflicts or advance the mutually beneficial partnership between the United States and Iraq," Rubio said, according to State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott.

An Iraqi political source said the US had conveyed that it "holds a negative view of previous governments led by former prime minister Maliki". In a letter, US representatives said that while the selection of the prime minister is an Iraqi decision, "the United States will make its own sovereign decisions regarding the next government in line with American interests". The US wields key leverage over Iraq as the country's oil export revenue is largely held at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York, in an arrangement reached after the 2003 US invasion toppled military dictator Saddam Hussein. Iraq's parliament meets Tuesday to elect a new president, who holds a ceremonial role but will appoint a prime minister.

A US-based rights group claimed on Monday it had "confirmed" reports of deaths of 5,848 people in a wave of protests in Iran suppressed by security forces.—Agencies

UK's ex-chancellor sparks controversy by 'opposing entry of his own parents'

In revealing *Sunday Times* interview, Sajid Javid says he 'wouldn't allow his unskilled father or his non-English speaking mother entry' into UK under current rules

By Our Correspondent

LONDON: In a revealing interview with *The Sunday Times*, former UK Chancellor Sajid Javid reflected on his life journey from a childhood marked by poverty, domestic violence and racism to a career as a multimillionaire, cabinet minister, and home secretary. He also discussed his family's complex past and integration in Britain and modern immigration policy.

Among the most striking revelations, British Pakistani Javid admitted that under the existing immigration rules, he "wouldn't allow either his unskilled father or his non-English speaking mother entry today".

"The biggest block to good community cohesion is English. We should have set a requirement that if you want to settle in the UK, you should be able to speak fluent English. We should have done that ages ago," he said.

Javid's parents arrived from Pakistan in the early 1960s. His father, arriving with just £1, worked as a bus driver, mill worker and shop owner, while his mother who was uneducated and initially unable to speak English, struggled to adapt. *The Colour of Home*, Javid's new memoir, details a childhood shaped by hardship and family tension.

The memoir describes his father's violence. Javid recounts being beaten with a leather slipper, a wooden spoon and on one occasion a hammer that required a CT scan. He writes about enduring racist attacks from skinheads and school bullies, as well as the emotional toll of growing up in cramped and impoverished living conditions.

"Crouching in a ball and covering his face while his father beat him," Javid recalls, highlights the intensity of these early struggles.

Family tensions extended to marriage expectations. His mother initially objected to his white Christian wife Laura refusing to meet her for two years, and had even tried to arrange a marriage with his cousin. His mother also "didn't want two black workmen her husband employed to come for dinner" though she later learnt English and "came to deeply regret her racism towards the black workmen". Later in life, his father apologised to Javid for his past violence.

Despite these hardships, the family's story is one of resilience. Javid fulfilled his childhood goal of buying his parents a house in Bristol, writing that one of his proudest moments was achieving "enough to give myself and my family a better life".

He told the interviewer that a "Reform voter… might think this is exactly the kind of family that we want in the UK because they went on a journey and look where they've ended".

In politics, Javid was known for his positions on immigration. He supported a post-Brexit points-based system but argued that the UK "lets in too many immigrants" and stressed that language skills are essential for community cohesion.

Pakistan, Myanmar agree to strengthen bilateral relations

Understanding emerges in talks between foreign ministers of both countries

By Baqir Sajjad Syed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Myanmar agreed Monday to renew and strengthen bilateral relations through expanded trade, people-to-people engagement and academic exchanges, signaling a diplomatic reset after years of limited engagement.

The understanding emerged from delegation level talks between Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar and Myanmar's Minister of Foreign Affairs Than Swe, followed by a joint press conference in Islamabad.

Dar said the discussions were "productive and comprehensive", and underscored the need for sustained, structured and result oriented initiatives, particularly in capacity building.

He said the visit by Myanmar's foreign minister reflected the importance both sides attach to revitalising relations and called for resolving all contentious issues through dialogue and diplomacy.

Relations between Pakistan and Myanmar have experienced a period of silence in recent years, largely influenced by the Rohingya crisis. Pakistan has condemned Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingya Muslim minority at international forums, including the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and the United Nations, while providing humanitarian assistance and hosting refugees.

FOREIGN Minister Ishaq Dar shakes hands with Myanmar's FM Than Swe at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad. —X/ForeignOfficePk

Despite those strains, recent engagement suggests a pragmatic turn in ties. Dar also emphasised the importance of deepening academic linkages and youth engagement, saying Pakistan values its "cordial and friendly" relations with Myanmar and remains keen to expand cooperation across mutually beneficial fields.

The two sides expressed their commitment to broadening cooperation in religious tourism, cultural exchanges, trade and economic engagement, science, humanitarian cooperation and consular matters. Than Swe highlighted the potential of religious tourism as a means to strengthen cultural ties and enhance people-to-people connectivity.

Earlier, the delegations reviewed the full spectrum of bilateral relations and exchanged views on regional and international peace and security. They agreed to coordinate on matters of mutual interest.

Following the talks, the two countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Political Consultations between their foreign ministries. Dar and Than Swe signed the document, which officials said would provide an institutional mechanism for regular engagement and sustained dialogue on bilateral, regional and international issues.

Pakistan reaffirmed its support for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Myanmar and reiterated its principled position in favour of national reconciliation there. Security cooperation has remained a key pillar of the relationship, with Pakistan providing training to Myanmar armed forces. In 2015, Myanmar became the first foreign buyer of the Sino-Pakistani JF-17 Thunder fighter jet, ordering 16 aircraft.

Xi refers to India, China as 'elephant, dragon dancing together'

HONG KONG: China's President Xi Jinping said China and India were 'good neighbours, friends and partners' as he wished President Droupadi Murmu congratulations on the South Asian nation's Republic Day, the official Xinhua news agency reported on Monday.

Over the past year, President Xi said, China-India relations have continued to improve and develop and are of "great significance for maintaining and promoting world peace and prosperity," according to Xinhua.

Xi said China has always believed that being 'good neighbours, friends and partners' is the right choice for both China and India. He referred to China and India as the 'dragon and the elephant dancing together', Xinhua said.

Xi said he hoped that both sides would expand exchanges and cooperation and address each other's concerns to promote healthy and stable relations.

The nuclear-armed Asian neighbours share a 3,800km border that is poorly demarcated and has been disputed since the 1950s.

Ties between the countries were shaken by a 2020 clash in which 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers died in hand-to-hand combat. After that, the Himalayan border was heavily militarised by both sides.

Both countries began improving ties last year after staging a series of high-level bilateral visits.

Direct flights resumed in 2025 as both countries stepped up trade and investment flows against the backdrop of U.S. President Donald Trump's combative foreign policy.—Reuters

Israel confirms return of last Gaza prisoner's remains

Hamas says return reflects the group's commitment to ceasefire agreement

JERUSALEM: The Israeli military said on Monday that the remains of the last prisoner held in Gaza, Ran Gvili, had been identified and were being repatriated to Israel.

The announcement put an end to a lengthy process to locate and return the last of the 251 prisoners taken by Hamas during their October 2023 attack on Israel.

Meanwhile, Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu hailed the return of all those held prisoner "down to the very last".

The latest set of prisoner handovers were part of the first phase of the US-backed ceasefire deal, which began on October 10 and aimed to stop the fighting in the Palestinian territory.

Gvili's family had expressed strong opposition to launching the second phase of the plan before they had received his remains.

The Israeli military said in a statement that its representatives "informed the family of Ran Gvili... that their loved one has been identified and will be returned for burial".

It added that all prisoners have been returned from the Gaza Strip to the State of Israel.

The gradual return of the prisoners over several stages had been a complicated and arduous process for both sides.

Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said in a statement that "the discovery of the body of the last Israeli prisoner in Gaza confirms Hamas's commitment to all the requirements of the ceasefire agreement on the Gaza Strip".

Officials said on Sunday that Israeli forces were searching for Gvili's remains in a cemetery in northern Gaza.

The announcement of the search came after visiting US envoys reportedly pushed Israeli officials to reopen Gaza's Rafah crossing, a vital entry point for aid.

Israeli officials said on Monday that though they would open the crossing, only pedestrians would be allowed to travel through the crossing to Egypt.

Reopening Rafah, a vital entry point for aid into Gaza, forms part of the US-brokered truce. —AFP

Trump sends top border official to Minneapolis after backlash

• State, cities of Minneapolis and St Paul ask court to pause operation • Federal judge hears arguments whether the deployment of federal officers violates state's sovereignty • White House dismisses concerns as Congress Democrats threaten to hold up funding unless ICE reformed

MINNEAPOLIS: In a bid to regain control over an escalating crisis sparked by the second killing of a protester against his administration's militarised immigration raids, US President Donald Trump dispatched his top border official to Minnesota on Monday.

Trump said that Tom Homan, his point man for border security, would arrive in the state later and "will report directly to me".

As Minneapolis has become ground zero in the clash between Trump and growing numbers of Americans over his nationwide immigration crackdown, Trump's deputy attorney general, Todd Blanche, described the city on *Fox News* as a 'powder keg'.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), an agency under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has been transformed under Trump into the United States' most heavily funded law enforcement body.

But polls show growing anger over its frequently brutal tactics.

A huge rally took place despite bitter cold in Minneapolis on Friday to protest the raids and the point blank shooting by an ICE agent of protester Renee Good, a 37-year-old mother of three on Jan 7. Then on Saturday, immigration agents gunned down Alex Jeffrey Pretti, also 37, after having already tackled him to the ground.

MINNEAPOLIS: People protesting against the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) march through downtown streets a couple of days after agents shot dead 37-year-old ICU nurse Alex Pretti.—AFP

Like Good, the intensive care unit nurse was a US citizen.

More rallies erupted after his death in Minneapolis, New York and other major cities across the United States.

Minnesota's sovereignty

On Monday, a federal judge in Minneapolis was hearing arguments on whether the deployment of federal officers — often masked, heavily armed and unidentified — violates the state of Minnesota's sovereignty.

The judge would consider a request to temporarily stop Trump administration's immigration crackdown in Minnesota, following the fatal shooting of a second US citizen over the weekend that sparked a fierce backlash.

The state and the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul are asking the court to pause the 3,000-agent operation, calling it a "completely disproportionate" violation of state sovereignty. The Trump administration, in a court filing, called the request an "absurdity" that would make federal law an afterthought.

In Congress, Democrats are threatening to hold up funding for the US government unless immigration enforcement agencies are reformed.

Trump has so far dismissed concerns. The 79-year-old Republican's first reaction to Pretti's killing was to suggest that the nurse had come intending to shoot at the police.

Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison then accused Trump of pushing a "flat-out insane" narrative.

In Monday's court action the judge was hearing arguments from state and city lawyers that the federal deployments amount to an occupying force.

Also under consideration was a bid to force federal officials to preserve evidence related to Pretti's killing.

The lawsuits highlight the deep rift between local and federal law enforcement over the deployment, dubbed "Operation Metro Surge". Trump's immigration raids have focused deliberately on Democratic-run cities, pitting mayors and governors against the president.

Local police have repeatedly confronted federal agents and Minnesota Governor Tim Walz has even suggested he could call out the state's National Guard to push back against Trump's forces.

Trump will also be watching signs of growing disenchantment from his Republican Party in Congress. The party is usually in lockstep with Trump but it has only a slender majority.

One of the most prominent cautions came from House Oversight Committee chairman James Comer, who signalled on Sunday that federal agents should withdraw from Minneapolis — an intervention that would normally be unheard of from a figure considered one of Trump's staunchest loyalists.

Sixty of the state's largest businesses, including Target, 3M, UnitedHealth and US Bancorp, have called for an immediate de-escalation of tensions between the state and the Trump administration.

Trump claimed that the immigration agents would leave Minneapolis "at some point".—Agencies

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